

The mycotoxin deoxynivalenol predisposes for the development of necrotic enteritis in broilers

Antonissen G.^{1,2}, Van Immerseel F.¹, Pasmans F.¹, Ducatelle R.¹, Haesebrouck F.¹, Timbermont L.¹, Verlinden M.¹, Dewulf J.³, Eeckhout M.⁴, De Saeger S.⁵, Delezie E.⁶, Martel A.¹, Croubels S.²

¹. Department of Pathology, Bacteriology and Poultry Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University

². Department of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Biochemistry, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University

³. Department of Reproduction, Obstetrics and Herd Health, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University

⁴. Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Biosciences and Landscape Architecture, Ghent University, Schoonmeerstraat 52, 9000 Gent, Belgium

⁵. Department of Bio-analysis, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Ghent University, Harelbekestraat 72, 9000 Gent, Belgium

⁶. Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO) Animal Sciences Unit, Scheldeweg 68, 9090 Melle, Belgium

Corresponding author: Gunther.Antonissen@UGent.be

Clostridium perfringens induced subclinical necrotic enteritis (NE) causes important economic losses in the broiler industry. *Fusarium* mycotoxins, like deoxynivalenol (DON), may affect the intestinal epithelial integrity. The objective of this study was to examine whether DON at contamination levels below the maximum guidance level in poultry feed is a predisposing factor for NE in broilers.

In this study we used a highly reproducible *in vivo* infection model mimicking subclinical NE (Gholamiandehkordi et al., 2007). A total of 360 one-day-old Ross 308 broilers were randomly divided into four groups of three replicates with 30 birds per replica. Throughout the entire experiment, groups 1 and 4 received a blank diet while groups 2 and 3 received a diet experimentally contaminated with DON. All birds in group 1 and 2 were challenged orally with *C. perfringens* strain 56 containing approximately 4×10^8 cfu/ml for four consecutive days starting at day 17. The remaining groups received sterile medium.

At 1, 2 or 3 days after the final challenge with *C. perfringens*, chickens were euthanized and scored macroscopically for intestinal NE lesions. Chickens that received DON and *C. perfringens* had significantly ($\alpha=0.05$, $P<0.001$) more lesions than chickens that received only *C. perfringens*, with 46.6% and 19.5% of chickens positive for NE lesions, respectively. In non-inoculated groups no NE lesions were present.

In conclusion, the presence of DON in the feed in concentrations lower than the maximum guidance level of 5000 µg/kg is a predisposing factor for the development of NE in broilers.

References

Gholamiandehkordi, A.R.; Timbermont, L.; Lanckriet, A.; Van Den Broeck, W.; Pedersen, K.; Dewulf, J.; Pasmans, F.; Haesebrouck, F.; Ducatelle, R.; Van Immerseel F., 2007. Quantification of gut lesions in a subclinical necrotic enteritis model. Avian Pathology 36, 375-382.

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